



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, D.C. 20515-6502**

November 8, 2006

Dear Republican Colleague:

There's no point and no value in sugarcoating this: we took a pounding Tuesday night. From coast to coast, we lost races we knew would be tough and races we thought we could win despite the tough environment. We lost our House majority, as well as some thoughtful, hard-working Members.

**We face two futures.** The question now is what we do about it. I see two paths before us. In the first, we don't face our setback head-on, don't learn its lessons, and after some necessary and hard conversations, don't pull together as a team to do the hard work necessary to reassert ourselves. That path points to Nancy Pelosi and Rahm Emanuel using the tools of incumbency and control over House process to protect their Members from tough votes and let their freshmen consolidate their positions in their districts. We fail to offer a compelling alternative, and in January of 2009 the House votes for the second time in a row to elect a Democrat Speaker. It's happened before; these are the tactics that preserved Democrat majority control over the House throughout the 1980s when Ronald Reagan was winning Presidential elections by landslides.

The second path has us confronting those lessons head-on, renewing our commitment to the principles that brought us to the majority in 1994, articulating a powerful and positive vision for the future based on those principles, and joining together as a team toward the common goal of a smaller, more accountable federal government that respects personal freedom and responsibility.

I am running for Republican Leader to lead us down the second path – another long run of Republican majority control, driven by dedication to our principles, a steady stream of new, powerful ideas, and commitment to working together as a team for our party and our country. And I'm running to avoid the first: a narrow but strengthening Democrat majority based on pork-barrel politics and avoiding the big problems that our country faces. I'm asking for your support as Republican Leader because I believe that if we do our jobs right, starting now, we can recover not just our majority, but the energy and commitment of a vibrant long-term majority.

**Why we lost seats.** I'll be talking with everyone in our Conference in the coming days about how we can rebound. If I haven't talked with you yet, I will soon. Widespread concern about the war in Iraq was clearly a factor, but to my mind the issue was much closer to home. Our voters stopped thinking of us as the party of principle because we lost our commitment to and confidence in our core principles. We fell into the trap of exploiting the marginal advantages of majority control instead of constantly advancing those principles. We got used to talking with those whom we'd already convinced instead of persuading the unpersuaded. We got used to playing not to lose instead of playing to win. And somehow, we grew to accept the notion that we were entitled to continued majority control, instead of having to constantly earn it.

We did make progress toward righting the ship over the last two years. Our earmark reforms showed Republicans were reengaged in the fight to change the status quo in Washington. They represented meaningful institutional reform that would have fit comfortably within the *Contract with America*. We also enacted the most significant entitlement reforms since 1997, enacted an emergency spending bill for Iraq and hurricane relief which rejected \$14 billion in unnecessary spending from the Senate, and held the line on discretionary spending. But ultimately, the die had been cast even before these victories. Many of our voters wondered whether instead of changing Washington, Washington had changed us. And the Foley scandal, along with other brazen betrayals of the public trust by other Members, cemented in voters' minds the picture of a party that had lost its way. The renewal of our reform commitment was too late, and too limited, to reverse our party's fate.

**The road back.** When I campaigned for Majority Leader last January, I called for renewal of our energy, determination, and imagination, and while we made progress, I'm calling for more of the same today. As I see it, our chief challenge will be to find new ways to articulate these core principles in ways that reflect both the values Americans hold dear and the practical challenges they face. We no longer have several advantages of majority; we no longer run the Committees, we no longer control the floor calendar. We'll need to be innovators instead of gatekeepers; to offer principled and creative responses to Democrat agenda items; to develop and communicate initiatives that our voters find compelling enough to return us to majority control. We'll need to hold the Democrats accountable for their votes, particularly those who distanced themselves from Nancy Pelosi and Howard Dean during this race. We're going to need to take some well-considered risks. We'll need to work harder at listening to each other, because without unity, there will be no success. And with the Presidential primaries starting in January 2008, we'll need to get to work soon.

I know this kind of effort can be successful because I've seen it succeed before. In the early 1990s I was one of a handful of renegades who were sick of being in the minority, and sicker than that at colleagues who were content with sweeping up the crumbs that Democrats left them instead of driving the big change that America needed and wanted. We developed the vision that led to the *Contract with America*, which proudly said that House Republicans were ready as a team to take on the Washington status quo on America's behalf.

It took the concerted hard work and dedication of hundreds of Members and candidates all over the nation for the *Contract* to be successful, but in the end it was worth it. We gained 52 seats in one night and set off on the course that led to historic welfare reforms, the biggest tax cuts in American history, the biggest retirement security and regulatory reforms since the Great Depression, and a balanced federal budget. We have done it before, and we can do it again.

And so I'm asking for your support as our party's leader in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress. I am running as one who knows how to build teams; how to articulate a vision for the future; how to set bold goals that bring out the best in our team; and how to achieve those goals. I'll be asking you to work hard, but I'll work harder. Working together, and playing to win, we can come back as a renewed, strengthened majority.

As I've said before, I'm up for it if you are.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John", written in a cursive style.

John Boehner